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VOL. I.

SERMON XVI.

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THE GREAT CHANGE.

II. COR. v. 17.—*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*

It is not uncommon for men, in the darkness of apostacy from God, to imagine that there is no great difference of character between saints and sinners : that since Jesus Christ has died, and the Holy Ghost been sent down from Heaven, men can become interested in the blessings of salvation without experiencing any great moral change. But the testimony of God is, " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new."

What does this mean ? In a plain scriptural manner to answer this question, will be my object in this discourse.

I. If any man be in Christ he has a *new God*.

Such is the nature of the human soul that it must have a God ; an object of supreme affection. It cannot exist in the rational exercise of all its powers without loving some object supremely. This, in the language of the Bible, is its God. And the character of the soul is determined by the character of its God.

Before the apostacy, man loved Jehovah supremely. But Satan, the father of lies, came into Eden, and told our first parents, that if they would eat of the fruit which God had forbidden, *they* should be as gods. He did not say that this would glorify Jehovah, or benefit

their posterity; but he said that it would exalt themselves. Self, as an object of supreme regard, was now brought distinctly before them: And out of supreme regard to themselves, they disobeyed God:—they *took of the fruit and did eat*: And men *out of Christ*, have regarded themselves supremely ever since. But if any man be in *Christ*, he is, in this respect, a *new creature*. He no longer regards himself supremely, but Jehovah. He has the same God that Adam had before his apostacy. Mark the change when man apostatized. Before, he loved Jehovah supremely: after, himself. Mark the change when a man becomes a new creature. Before, he loves himself supremely: after, Jehovah. Great change: from loving supremely the creature, to loving supremely the Creator. He has a new God.

II. He has a *new object of pursuit*.

It is a fundamental principle of human action, that every man will seek to please his own God. The man who is in Christ, having changed his God, changes of course his object of pursuit. Before, his object was to exalt and gratify himself. Now, his object is to please and glorify Jehovah. The man may continue in the same worldly employment, if a lawful one, in which he was before; and he may do many of the same things, with his hands, which he did before; but he has in view a totally different *object*;—not his own exaltation, but the glory of God, and the spiritual, eternal happiness of men. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, and given him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is not his own, he is bought with a price; and his feelings respond to his duty;—glorify God, in body and spirit which are His. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, his grand, ruling object is, to do all to the glory of God. Hence,

III. He adopts a *new rule of action*.

It is another law of human action, that every man will adopt such a rule as he thinks will accomplish his object. The man who is in Christ, having changed his grand object of pursuit, changes, of course, his rule of action. Before, his rule was to do those things, and those only, which he thought would elevate himself; or in some way promote his own advantage. Now, his rule is to do those things, and those only, which God declares will glorify Him, and promote the happiness of

His holy kingdom. His own will was the rule of action before ; now, the revealed will of God. And when his own will comes into competition with the will of God, his language is, Not my will, but *thine* be done. This is the habitual desire of his heart. And he exhibits it, not in words only, but in actions. For,

IV. He lives a *new life* :—a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

This faith is that confidence in Christ, which leads the man to *feel* that what He hath said is true ; and to *treat* it as true. Hence he looks principally, not at things seen and temporal ; but at things unseen and eternal. He lays up his treasure, not on the earth, but in Heaven ; and seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The love of Christ constrains him to live, not unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again. I do not mean by this that he is perfectly holy. He still commits sin ; but he loathes himself on account of it, and repents as in dust and ashes. He will not continue to indulge in what he knows to be sin ; nor will he continue to neglect what he knows to be duty. He seeks by prayer and supplication to know what duty is ; and he listens to the voice of God in revelation, that he may understand, for the purpose of *doing* it : and, so far as he knows, he has respect to *all* His commandments.

This obedience to the divine commands, springs from *new views*, and is prompted by *new feelings*. These views and feelings, as the grand spring of outward obedience, I shall briefly illustrate with regard to five particulars, viz. *God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, himself, and his fellow men.*

He has new views and feelings with regard to God. Before, he never saw any peculiar beauty, excellence, and glory in the character of God ; especially in his holiness, justice, and truth. He never saw any reason why he should love God, any farther than he thought that God loved him ; and would ultimately favour *his* cause. His soul *never* was chained by the splendours of the Eternal throne ; nor was it ever enraptured with the beauty of the holiness of Him that sits upon it. He never had such views of the glory of God, as to be changed into His image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But now he sees a beauty, a loveliness, an excellence, and a glory in God, surpassing the lustre of all creation. Not that the man has become blind to created glories: he loves his friends, and all his fellow men, more than he ever loved them before; and with a more pure and exalted affection. If any of them are holy, he sees a beauty and excellence in their character, which he never saw before; and he delights in it. But when he looks on God, though at a distance, and through a glass darkly, created excellence *dies*. The glories even of Gabriel, and of all created intelligences, are swallowed up and lost in the overflowing glories of the Godhead; and he cries, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee."

Before, he had no *confidence* in God. When disappointed in his favourite plans,—when his dearest earthly prospects were blasted,—it gave him no comfort to think, that *God* had done it. Now, though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine; the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flocks be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall; he will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

He did not, before, feel *safe* in God's hands. When his conscience was awakened, and he was led to feel his guilt; and also to feel that all his interests for time and eternity were in the hands of God, and at His disposal, he was distressed. Now, he wishes to be no where else. He surrenders himself, his friends, and all his interests, for both worlds, into the hands of God, and chooses to have them for ever at His disposal. So long as he can say, "The Lord reigneth," he will add, "Let earth rejoice." And the more deeply he feels that His kingdom extends over all, the greater his joy, till it becomes unspeakable, and full of glory.

He may have thought, before, that God was a respecter of persons, and been ready, at times, to charge Him with partiality. He may have lived in a place, visited by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; may have seen his friends and acquaintances awakened from the slumbers of moral death; and brought out of darkness into marvellous light. He may have seen their joy, and heard their songs; while *he*, after long, distressing anxiety, and many tears, may have been still in darkness and the shadow of death; groaning in dismal horrors of conscience, and fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation;

under a load of guilt, which was pressing him downward toward eternal despair. In this situation, he may have thought that God was hard, partial, a respecter of persons; and been almost ready to curse his God and King, and look upward. But the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, breaks in upon him, and he cries, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth: Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight—Bless the Lord in all places of his dominion: Bless the Lord, O my soul."

He has new views and feelings with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. He may have viewed Jesus Christ as an excellent character, before; and made mention of Him in his prayers, when he prayed. And he did, perhaps, sometimes pray;—in a thunder-storm, when the lightning blazed around him; or in time of sickness, when he stood over the bed of his dying friend; or when, at midnight, he anticipated his own death, and the coming judgment. When he felt in danger, when death and eternity seemed to be nigh, he attempted to pray; and he not unfrequently made mention of the name of Christ; but he had no view of His divine, transcendent glory. He saw no reason why angels should veil their faces, cast down their crowns, fall prostrate, and worship Him. Perhaps he thought him to be only a man; or at most an exalted creature. But he is now the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. He is the Alpha and Omega; the Beginning and the End, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty. He is over all, God blessed for ever. He is also partaker of human nature; and can be touched with the feeling of human infirmity. He is the Propitiation for sins;—for *our* sins, and for the sins of the whole world. He is the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He is an Advocate with the Father, the believer's *Life*. Take away his Divine Saviour,—you take away his only hope. He has no access to God; no deliverer from sin; no Saviour from perdition. In the agony of guilt, he sees no way in which God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

But the glories of Immanuel break forth on Calvary, with a brightness which puts out the sun; and in that light, he sees that God *can* be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth. And in view of the length, and the breadth, and the height of that love which passeth knowledge, he feels that He *will* do it; and he sings, Alleluia, salvation, and honour, and glory to the Lord our God. Such an High

Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens, and able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him : This is all my salvation, and all my desire.

He has new views and feelings with regard to the Holy Ghost. He had probably heard that there was a Holy Ghost, before ; but, perhaps, he did not believe it. Or if he did believe it, he knew next to nothing about Him. He never felt in perishing need of the Holy Ghost. He felt as if he could pray, and give to the poor, keep the Sabbath, pay his honest debts, and do many other things, in a manner *acceptable to God*, without the influences of the Holy Ghost. But he now feels that without Him he shall do nothing acceptable ; and rejoices that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He knows by experience what this means, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." And he knows what this means, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The man who is in Christ feels deeply his need, not only of a Redeemer, but a *Sanctifier* ; One who can enlighten his understanding, purify and elevate his affections, and prepare him to be presented spotless and faultless before the throne of Divine glory, with exceeding and everlasting joy. He has already experienced of the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Had it not been for the Holy Ghost, he had been to this day impenitent, unbelieving, dead in trespasses and sins ; going downward toward eternal death. He knows this, he *feels* it, and in the feelings of his heart cries, To Him be the glory. God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts. God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. We are His workmanship, created anew, in Christ Jesus, unto good works.

He has new views and feelings with regard to himself. Before, he thought himself to be as good as others ;—as good, at heart, as many professors of religion ; and vastly better than some. When he compared himself with other men, as he often did, especially with some professors of religion, he felt himself to be almost good enough. Instead of crying, God be merciful to me a sinner ; he felt more like saying, I thank thee that I am not as other men. He had no idea that *his*

heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He thought that he was rich, increased in goods, and had need of nothing ; not that he was poor, miserable, blind, naked, and in want of all things. When told of his character and condition, by some faithful minister, or some Christian friend, he did not believe them. All these things, he was ready to say, have I kept from my youth up : What lack I ?

But his views are now totally changed. He sees that he has been violating the first commandment, through his whole course of moral action :—he has had another God before Jehovah, and been serving the creature, not the Creator. He has sought his own glory, above the glory of God and all the happiness of His kingdom. Never has he such views of the desperate wickedness of the human heart, as when, with fixed eye, he gazes on himself. He has been regardless of the Saviour, deaf to the calls of mercy, and trampling on dying love. O, he is vile, and has nothing to answer. His very soul is stained with guilt, which nothing but the blood of Christ can wash away. Now he sees, why Jesus must enter the holy place with His *blood* ; and begins to feel the worth of a Saviour. Now, too, he feels his need of a Sanctifier, who can create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him ; who, though his sins are indeed as scarlet, and as crimson, can make them white as snow. And while he finds that in himself dwells no good thing, and cries, in anguish of spirit, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? he is enabled, through grace, to add, Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I live, yet not I ; but Christ liveth in me : and, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

He has new views and feelings with regard to his fellow-men. Once he looked on them with a great degree of indifference ; unless they were, in some way, particularly connected with *him*. The consequence was, he would do little, except for himself, his relatives, or particular friends. And he would do little for them, except for the body, or for this world. His soul was bounded, on every side, by the narrow limits of *self*, and of *time*.

Now, he rises, and looks over the whole family of man. He views each one that passes before his mind, with deep emotion, and ardently longs for his *eternal* good. His eye fastens on the *soul* ; he follows it on to the judgment, and onward still, while it expands in endless being ;

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and he feels that it is worth a thousand worlds : it lives when worlds expire, and lives to sing—or weep for ever. Hence you may see him laying out plans for doing good hundreds and thousands of years to come ; and to the whole empire of Jehovah. Bursting out from the limits of self, and of time, his love, like the light of heaven, pours forth on creation, and settles upon every object that is able to receive it : it goes onward into eternity, and onward—and too divine to spend itself on creatures, it rises up to God,—and, kindled anew by the glories of the Godhead, shines brighter and brighter for ever. Show him the will of God, and you govern him to all eternity ; and his grand object at every step will be, to become more and more *like God*. The consequence is,

V. The man who is in Christ has *new joys*. His joys are as much more pure, expansive, and exalted, as are his views, affections, and efforts. Once, he rejoiced in himself, and in this world. His joys rose or fell, as he thought himself and his connexions to be, for this world, exalted, or depressed.

Now, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and in the rising prospects of Immanuel's kingdom. Hence he loves the Bible in which these prospects are unfolded. He makes it the man of his counsel, his daily companion, and he reads it with great delight ; especially the promises made to Zion. As he reads, the prospect brightens ; he gazes with new delight, and is borne along till he sees the wilderness bud and blossom ; hears songs of deliverance in the desert, and praises of salvation from every land, to God and his Christ. And as he gazes, and wonders, and adores, he is borne onward till he sees a multitude that no man can number, coming up in glorified bodies, like the body of Jesus Christ ;—he sees them ascending, and catches their alleluias, as they enter heaven and bow with rapture before Him that loved them and gave himself for them. And,

VI. He has *new hopes*. He hopes soon to be among them, and to make one in that great congregation.

I do not mean by this, that he had no hope in days of impenitence and unbelief. He *had* a hope. But what good did it do him ? It did not purify his soul. It did not wean him from the world. It did not make him like Christ ; nor did it fit him for the employments or the joys of heaven. Had he died with only that hope, he would have been, to-day, in hopeless despair.

Now, he has a *good* hope. It arises from having the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. It weans him from the world, quickens him in duty, and leads him to have respect to all God's commandments. It leads him to be humble, to abhor himself, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to have his heart and conversation in heaven, and to "purify himself, even as God is pure."

Nor will this hope, like that of the wicked, perish at the giving up of the ghost. No, it will be an anchor sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; and it will not fail, till it is swallowed up in cloudless, and eternal vision. Even now, he is borne in everlasting arms; angels minister unto him; all things work together for his good, and help to increase that exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And when absent from the body, he is present with the Lord—he sees Him as he is—he is *like* Him, and mingles with that multitude which no man can number, in their anthem of glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

In view of what has been suggested, I remark,

1. That the man who is in Christ has experienced a *great* change.

If he has a *new God*, a *new object of pursuit*, a *new rule of action*, and lives a *new life*,—a life of obedience to God; if his outward actions spring from *new views* and *feelings* with regard to *God*, to *Jesus Christ*, to the *Holy Ghost*, to *himself*, and his *fellow men*; if these views and feelings lead him to have respect to *all* God's commandments; and thus give him *new joys*, and *new hopes*,—hopes, well founded, of dwelling eternally with God, and being in heart, perfectly like Him,—then surely he has experienced a *great* change. The Holy Ghost did not say too much, when in describing it He said, "born again"—"created anew"—"brought out of darkness into marvellous light"—"passed from death unto life."

2. If he who is in Christ has experienced this *great* change, then there is a *great* difference between the man who is in Christ, and the man who is out of Christ; or, in other words, between a saint and a sinner.

If men can bring themselves to believe that there is no great difference of character between saints and sinners *here*, then they hope that there will be no great difference of condition between them *hereafter*. But such a hope is *vain*. Say ye, saith God, to the righteous, It shall be well with him. But, wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him. The difference of character is so great between them, in this world, as to fit them for that great and eternal difference of condition in the world to come.

The gods they serve are of totally different characters. The God of the saint, is as different from the god of the sinner, as the Holy One of Israel is from a sinful dying man. This makes a great difference between their own characters, in *this* world; and it must make a great and eternal difference between *their* conditions in the world to come. Jehovah requires the *heart*. If this is withheld, he is robbed of *every* thing. And should any one continue to withhold his heart from God, and give it to other objects, he will depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;—he will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Fellow-mortal, hastening to the judgment; have *you* become a *new creature*? I do not ask you when, nor where, nor how; but have you *ever* become a new creature? Have you chosen Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for your God? Is it your great object to *glorify Him*? and is His revealed will your *rule of action*? Do you have respect to *all* his commandments, for the sake of glorifying Him, and *doing good*; trusting in Jesus Christ for what you need, to do this, and to be accepted in it? Do you *love* Jesus Christ; and contemplate with joy the rising prospects of His holy kingdom? Will you spend, and be spent in promoting his glory; in extending the honour of His name; and living not unto yourself, but unto Him that died for you and rose again? If so, you may hope that you are a new creature. And if a new creature, immortal glories await you. All things are yours; life, death, things present, things to come, all are yours. You are borne in everlasting arms; and when you put off the body, angels attend you—the gate of heaven opens—and multitudes that no man can number, shout your arrival. You are then with Christ, and see the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. You veil your face, cast down your crown, and, with saints and angels in heaven, cry, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

But where is he who is not a new creature, when *he* dies?—Sinking, and sinking, downward, and still farther downward, in the bottomless pit, for ever and ever! His heart can not endure—his hand can not be strong; for who can dwell with devouring fire? who *can* inherit everlasting burnings?

END. OF VOL. I.

